

Women on U.S. coins

A presentation to the
Central Ohio Numismatic Association

By Gerald Tebben
Feb. 19, 2020

REMARKABLE WOMEN:

Catalysts of Change

NATIONAL
COIN WEEK



April 19-25

2020

Centennial of Women's Suffrage

Remarkable Women: Catalysts of Change is the theme of this year's national coin week.

The inspiration for the theme is the 2020 centennial anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, granting women the right to vote.

Curiously, Ohio beat the federal government by a year. The Ohio General Assembly granted women the right to vote by legislative enactment in 1919.

Following decades of work and three failed attempts in Congress, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was passed by the House on May 21, 1919, and the Senate on June 4. It was ratified by Tennessee, the 36th and final state needed to secure enactment, on Aug. 18, 1920.

The journey of women on U.S. coins

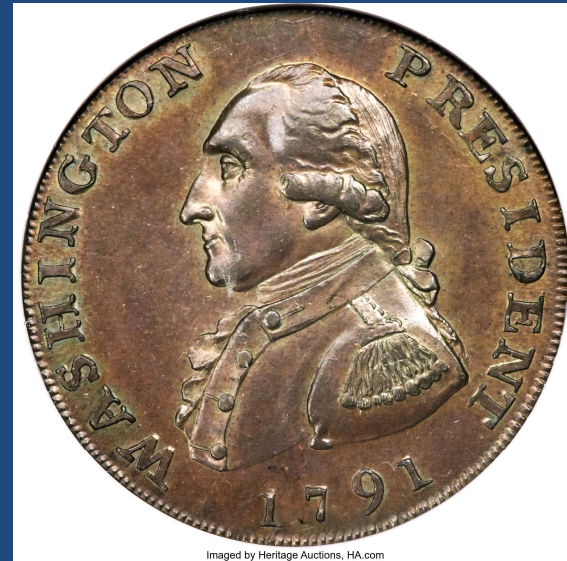
For the U.S. Mint's first 100 years, a woman appeared on just about every coin. She wasn't a real woman, but a personification of Liberty. Sometimes her hair was a fright, sometimes in a bun or under a hat. But always she was clearly and unmistakably a woman.

The first real woman appeared on a U.S. coin in 1893 with the minting of the Queen Isabella quarter dollar. For the next 80 years, women only occasionally appeared on coins and then only as ancillary individuals.

That changed in 1979, with the minting of the Susan B. Anthony dollar, the first U.S. coin to honor a woman for her own accomplishments.

Why Liberty?

Because George Washington didn't want to look like English King George III



After George Washington swatted down the idea of placing his portrait on U.S. coins, the nation's founders settled upon a personification of Liberty as the face of the nation.

While she has all but been replaced by presidents and patriots in recent years, her image has appeared on coins of just about every denomination.

Guessing who the artist's model was for each of the coins became a parlor game for coin collectors.



TrueView Images provided by Collectors Universe

George Washington forbade the use of his portrait on the nation's coins, regarding it as too "monarchical." However, he said nothing about his wife. The Mint's first coin, the 1792 half dime, has a matronly representation of Liberty on the obverse and a scrawny eagle on the reverse. It has been widely speculated since at least 1860, that the coin's Liberty is Martha Washington.



In his 1860 book, *A Description of Ancient and Modern Coins in the Cabinet Collection at the Mint of the United States*, James Ross Snowden, mint director from 1853 to 1861, referred to the coin as the “Washington half dime” and noted that the coin’s representation of Liberty “is popularly supposed to represent the features of Martha Washington, who is said to have sat for the artist while he was designing it.”

Martha Washington by Rembrandt Peale, circa 1856, based on a portrait by his father, Charles Willson Peale



TrueView Images provided by Collectors Universe

Martha Washington: Yes or No?



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No one knows her name but Mint Assayer William Ewing Dubois in an apparently catty mid-19th century memo claimed John Reich used his “fat mistress” as the model for what researcher Walter Breen called the “uncommonly buxom effigy of Miss Liberty” that appeared on the obverse of Reich’s Capped Bust coinage of the early 19th century. Reich’s design was placed on the half dollar in 1807 and rolled out to the dime, quarter dollar, quarter eagle and half eagle during the next two years.



Perhaps the best known and best documented model for Liberty on a 19th century coin is Philadelphia educator Anna W. Williams, whose portrait may or may not appear on the obverse of the Morgan dollar.

Walter Breen declared in his Complete Encyclopedia, "Morgan's design portrayed Miss Anna Willess Williams, a school teacher, as Ms. Liberty. Morgan, with difficulty, had persuaded her to become his model, and she sat for him five times at the home of the illustrious painter Thomas Eakins, under promise of strict secrecy." That secrecy was broken Aug. 13, 1879, when the Philadelphia Record reported that Williams was the model.

The face on George T. Morgan's dollar

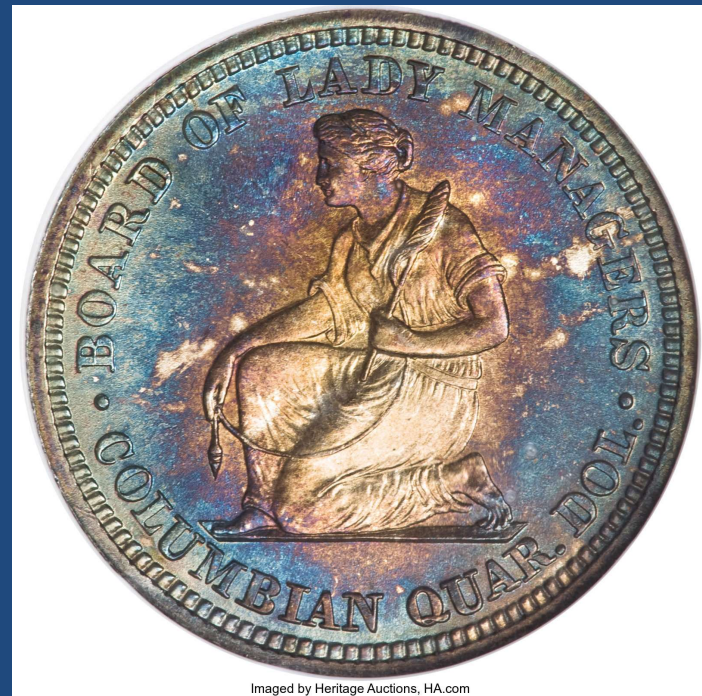


Anna W. Williams

However, in 2002, an undated letter from Morgan's daughter, Mrs. C. Mervin Graham, to her daughter was discovered that casts doubt on Williams' role. The letter said, "Father always said no matter how many models they posed for him, that he never bid any & that he just made up the obverse himself."

In his recently published book *Girl on the Silver Dollar*, researcher Roger W. Burdette concluded, "... It is probably that Morgan's original Liberty was a composite of his wife, Alice, and ancient Greek designs in the French interpretation. If any of Nannie Williams' features are included in the silver dollar design, it may be more coincidence than anything else."

First real woman on a U.S. coin



In 1893 Queen Isabella of Spain, of all people, became the first real woman to appear on a U.S. coin – a commemorative quarter dollar celebrating the Board of Lady Managers of the World's Columbian Exposition. Since then nearly 50 identifiable women and girls have appeared on the nation's coins.



A strong line connects the 1893 Isabella quarter dollar and the Susan B. Anthony dollar, the first coin made for general circulation that bears the image of a real woman.

Susan B. Anthony, a women's rights trailblazer, insisted that the Columbian Exposition have a board of lady managers. Congress appropriated \$10,000.

The board asked for that \$10,000 to be paid in the form of 40,000 commemorative quarters, which they sold for \$1 apiece.



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com



For the next 44 years, women appeared only intermittently on coins, usually as Liberty, but also as a passenger in a Conestoga wagon on the 1926-1939 Oregon Trail half dollars, swimming with a whale (as a mermaid) on the 1935 Hudson New York commemorative and somewhat cheesily as bathing beauties forming North and South America on the 1923 Monroe Doctrine Centennial half dollar.

Real women return

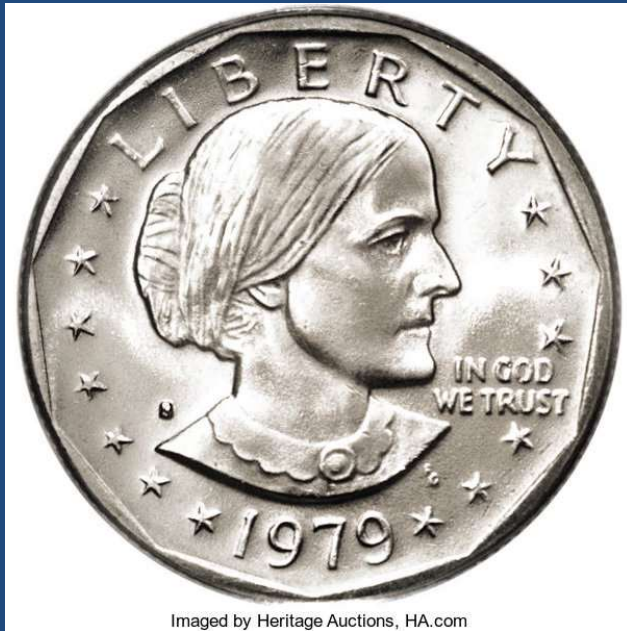


In 1937, the Mint struck a commemorative half dollar marking the 350th anniversary of the founding of the lost colony of Roanoke Island.

The obverse shows Sir Walter Raleigh, who funded the colony, but never went there.

The reverse shows Ellinor Dare holding her infant daughter Virginia, the first English child born in what is now the United States. No one knows what Ellinor or her daughter looked like, so the faces on the coin are artistic impressions.

First circulating coin



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Susan B. Anthony, a leader in the women's suffrage movement, became the first real woman to appear on a circulating United States coin in 1979 with the release of the first small dollar.

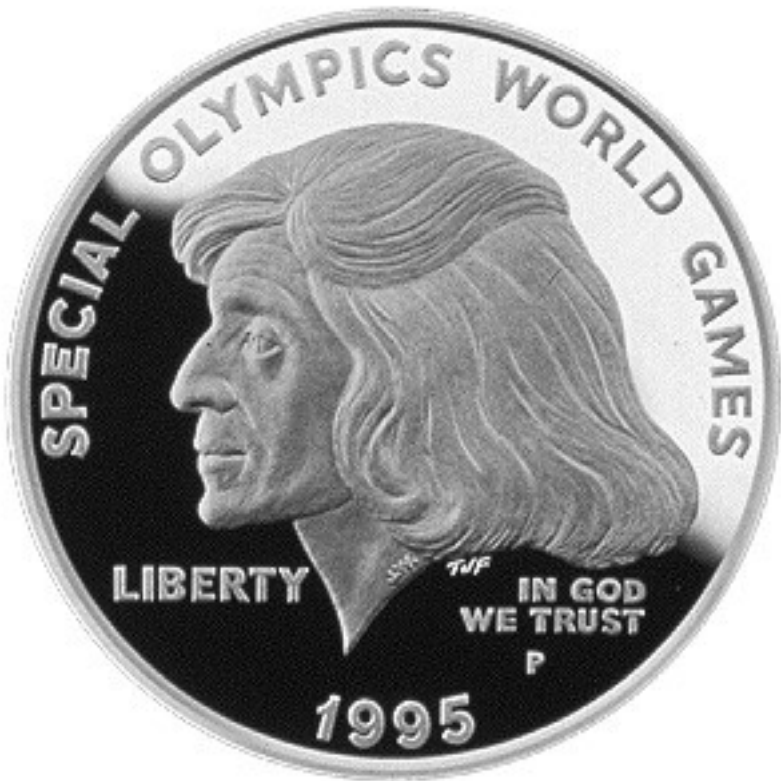
The coin showed Anthony on the obverse and reprised albeit scaled down the moon-landing reverse of the Eisenhower dollar.

The coin, which was widely criticized as ugly, fared poorly in circulation, primarily because it was easily confused with the similar-size quarter dollar.



In 1878, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton arranged for Congress to be presented with a proposed amendment giving women the right to vote. Introduced by Sen. Aaron A. Sargent (R-CA), it later became known colloquially as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment. It was eventually ratified as the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Anthony, who was arrested for illegally voting in 1872, died in 1906, 14 years before women gained the right to vote.



Special Olympics Commemorative

Eunice Kennedy Shriver, founder of Special Olympics and sister of assassinated president John F. Kennedy, appeared on a commemorative silver dollar in 1995 celebrating the organization for handicapped athletes she founded in 1968.

The coin is notable because it was the first and so-far only coin to depict a living woman. Shriver died in 2009.

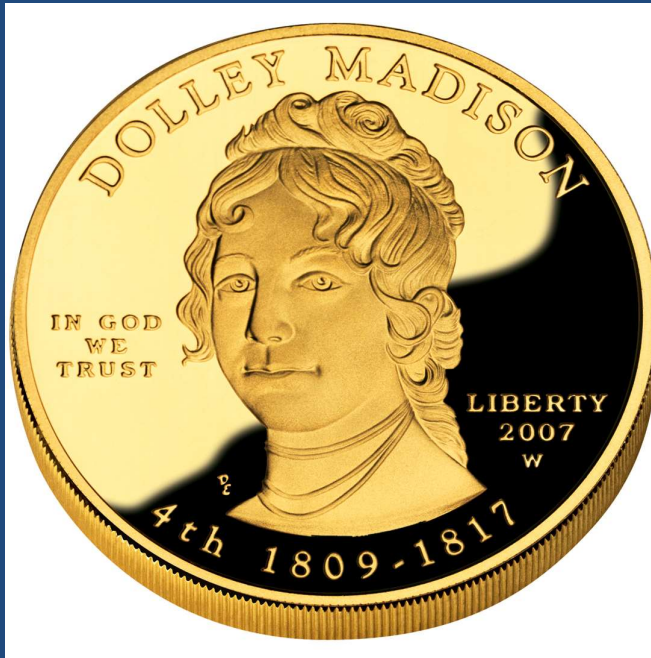
Dolley Madison I



Vivacious Dolley Madison, who famously saved Gilbert Stuart's painting of George Washington from the White House before the British set it afire during the War of 1812, appeared three times on two coins.

A commemorative silver dollar issued in 1999 to mark the 150th anniversary of her death, is a particularly lush affair. It was designed by the famed jeweler Tiffany & Co. and bears the firm's logo on both sides.

Dolley Madison II



Dolley Madison also appears on both sides of the 2007 First Spouse half-ounce gold \$10 coin. The obverse shows her bust. On the reverse, she stands in front of the unburned portrait of Washington.



Dolley Madison,
1804, by Gilbert
Stuart

British soldiers burn the White House in the 1816 book, *The History of England, from the Earliest Periods*, Volume 1, by Paul M. Rapin de Thoyras

Saving the painting

Dolley Madison recounted saving the painting in a letter to her sister, Anna. She was “within sound of the cannon” about 3 p.m. April 23, 1814, when she wrote:

“At this late hour a wagon has been procured, and I have had it filled with plate and the most valuable portable articles, belonging to the house. Whether it will reach its destination, the ‘Bank of Maryland,’ or fall into the hands of British soldiery, events must determine. Our kind friend, Mr. (Charles) Carroll, has come to hasten my departure, and in a very bad humor with me, because I insist on waiting until the large picture of General Washington is secured, and it requires to be unscrewed from the wall.

This process was found too tedious for these perilous moments; I have ordered the frame to be broken, and the canvas taken out. It is done! and the precious portrait placed in the hands of two gentlemen of New York, for safekeeping. And now, dear sister, I must leave this house, or the retreating army will make me a prisoner in it by filling up the road I am directed to take.”



Dolley Madison saved this portrait of George Washington by Gilbert Stuart from the British

Sacagawea dollar



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

As the millennium dawned, the Mint gave another stab at the small dollar. This time with a plain edge and a golden color, thanks to a manganese brass outer layers.

Sacagawea, who helped guide the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and her infant son, Jean Baptiste, appear on the obverse.

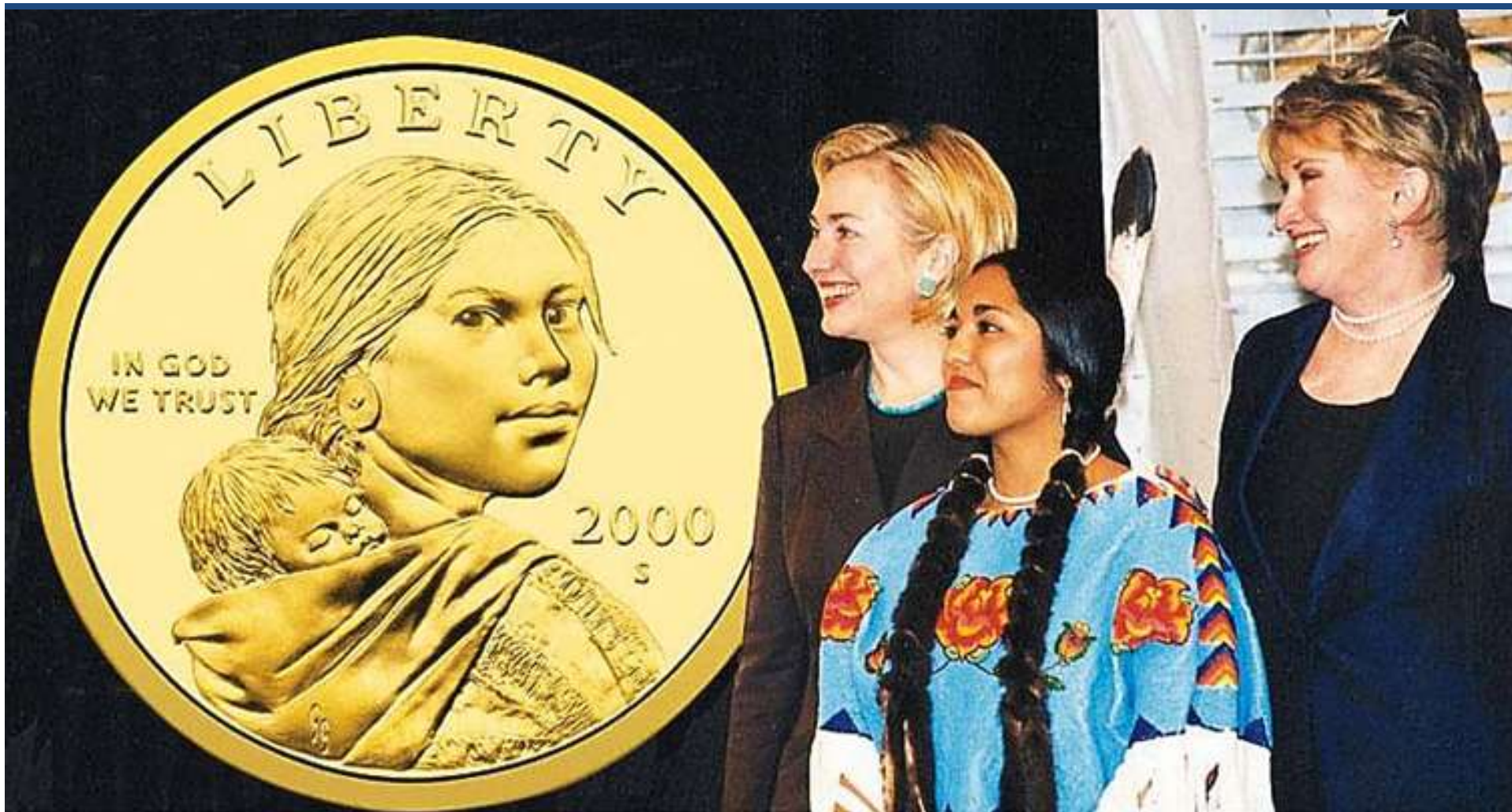
Who's on the coin?

While Lewis and Clark make frequent mention of Sacagawea in their journals, no pictures exist of her.

Artist Glenna Goodacre, who designed the coin, used.

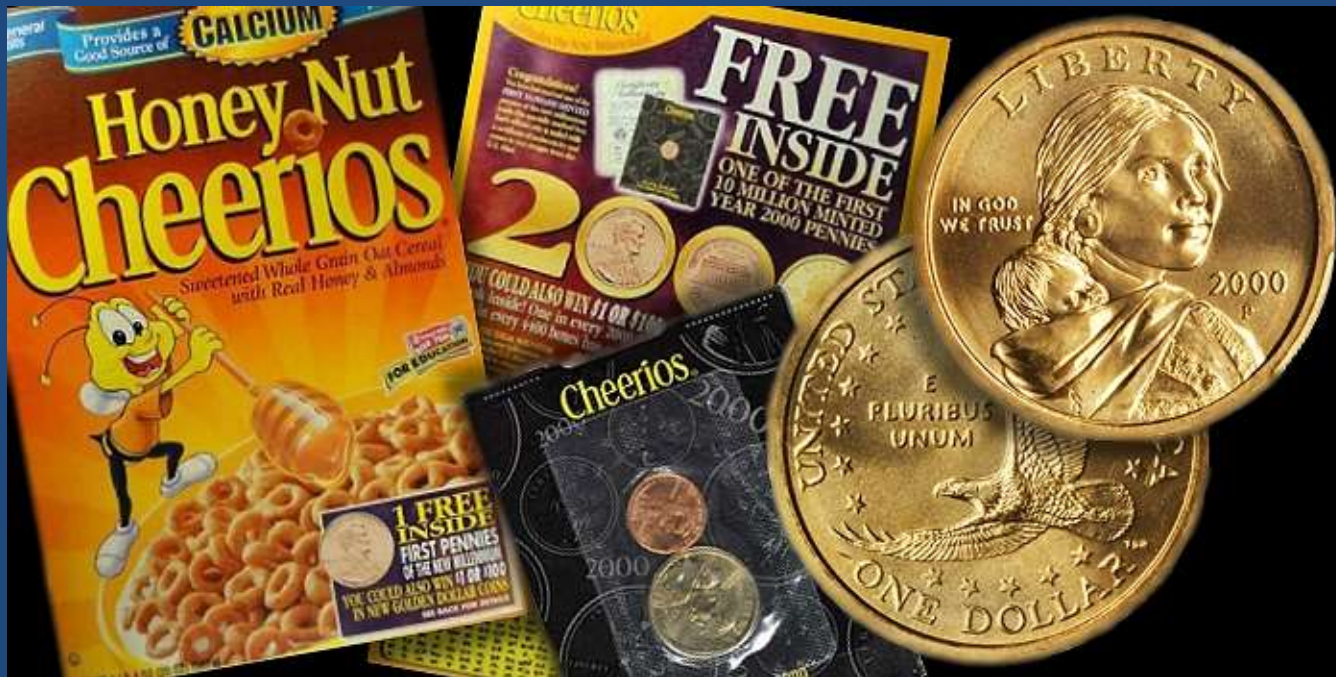
Shoshone-Bannock/Cree woman Randy'L He-dow Teton as a model for Sacagawea and a baby doll for the infant Jean Baptiste.

“I thought to myself, ‘I’m not the model type. I’m not tall and I don’t weigh 100 pounds,’ ” Teton told the *Idaho State Journal* in 2011. “But I think that history and culture are so important and that’s what really enticed me to pose for the pictures.”



Randy'L He-dow Teton, center, the model for the obverse of the Sacagawea dollar, poses during the coin design's unveiling in 1999 with First Lady Hillary Clinton, left, and sculptor Glenna Goodacre, who created the coin design.

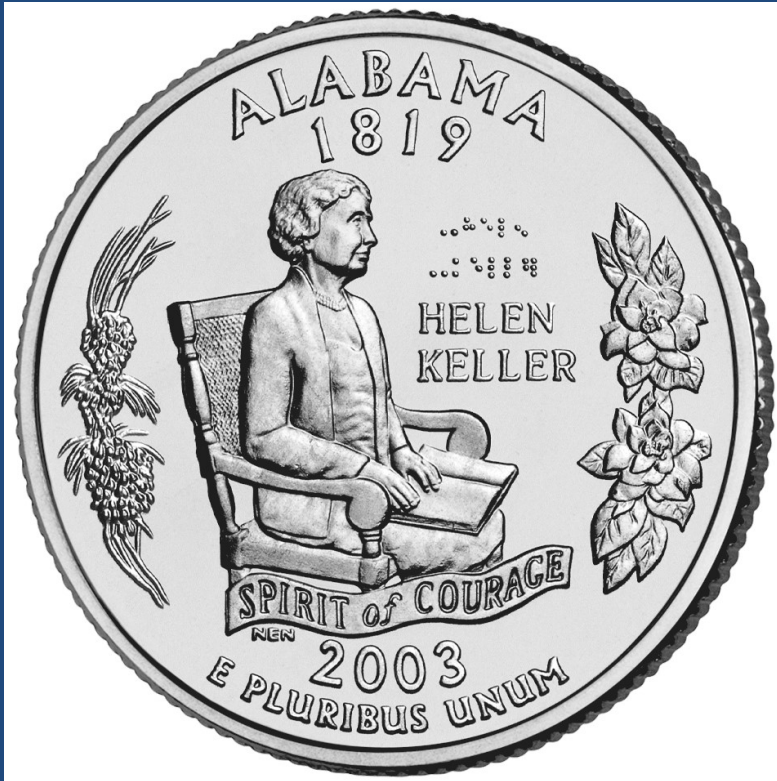
Cheerios



While most Sacagawea dollars are common and worth only face value, 5,500 coins distributed in Cheerios cereal boxes to promote the new coins were struck with a reverse die that is subtly different from production dies. These coins, which are distinguished by detailed eagle feathers, were randomly distributed in cereal boxes as part of the new coin's publicity in early 2000.

Collectors didn't recognize the difference until 2005. *Coin World's* Coin Values catalogs the coins at \$2,000 in MS-65 and \$10,000 in MS-68.

Helen Keller



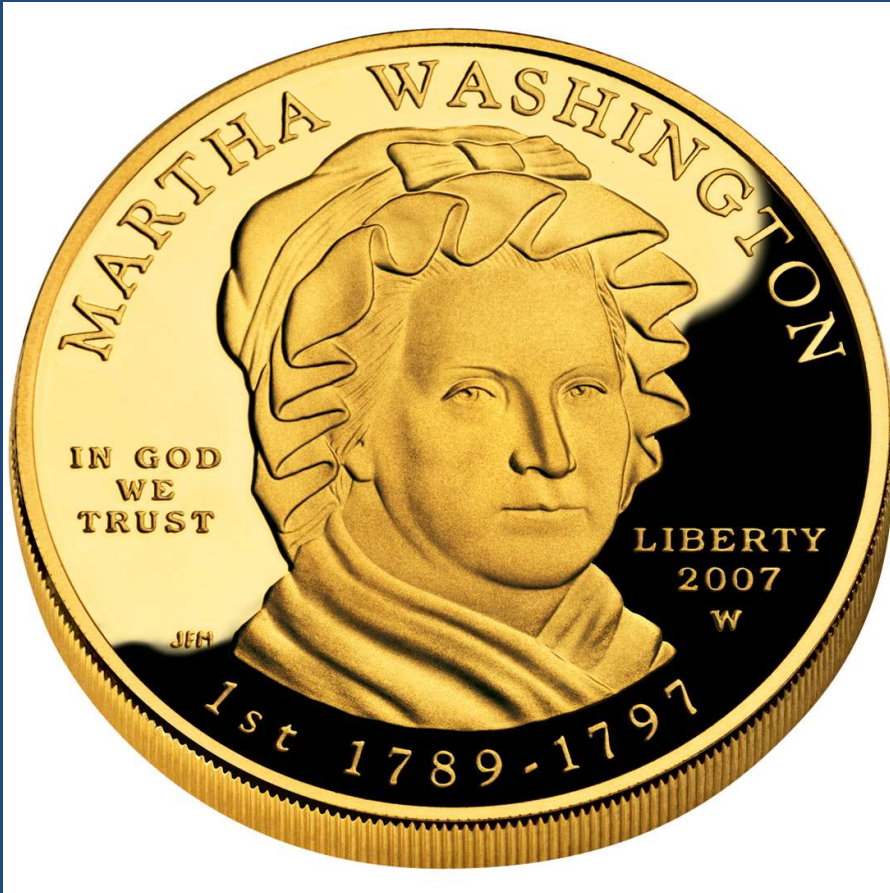
Helen Keller appears above a banner labeled SPIRIT OF COURAGE on the reverse of the 2003 Alabama quarter, the 22nd issue in the State Quarter program. Her name, both in regular type and Braille, appears to the right of her portrait. Keller, who lost her sight and hearing at 19 months because of an illness, famously learned to communicate under the tutelage of Anne Sullivan and spent her life as an advocate for the disabled, women and labor.

First spouses

As a companion to the Presidential dollar coinage program, the Mint produced \$10 one-half ounce gold bullion coins honoring the wives of presidents and one suffragette from 2007 to 2016.

The coins had miniscure mintages. Only 1,824 uncirculated and 2,471 proof Betty Ford coins were minted. Not widely collected, the rare coins tend to trade close to bullion

Martha Washington



Martha Washington finally made it to a coin in 2007, 215 years after the 1792 half disme was minted. The 2007 coin shows her bust on the obverse and sewing on the reverse.

Typically the coins honoring 19th century first spouses show the woman's portrait on the obverse and engaged in an activity on the reverse. Coins honoring 20th century presidential wives typically show the first lady's portrait on the obverse and a design emblematic of their lives on the reverse.

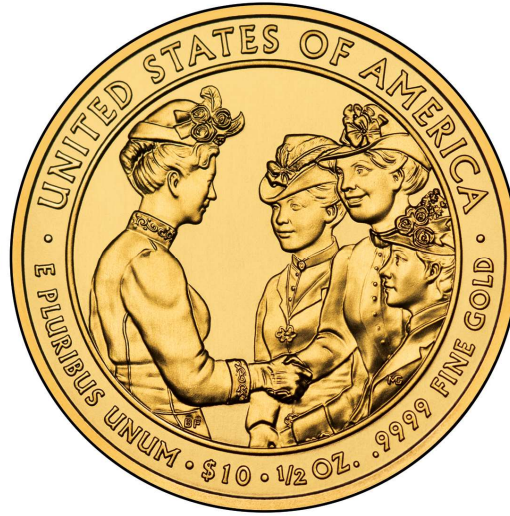
These are the first wives who appeared on First Spouse coins

Martha Washington
Louisa Adams
Sarah Polk
Mary Lincoln
Lucretia Garfield
Ida McKinley
Edith Wilson
Eleanor Roosevelt
Lady Bird Johnson

Abigail Adams
Ann Harrison
Margaret Taylor
Eliza Johnson
Francis Cleveland
Edith Roosevelt
Florence Harding
Elizabeth Truman
Pat Nixon

Dolley Madison
Letitia Tyler
Abigail Fillimore
Julia Grant
Caroline Harrison
Helen Taft
Grace Coolidge
Mamie Eisenhower
Betty Ford

Elizabeth Monroe
Julia Tyler
Jane Pierce
Lucy Hayes
Frances Cleveland
Ellen Wilson
Lou Hoover
Jacqueline Kennedy
Nancy Reagan



The Cleveland coins

Two non-consecutive terms

The reverse of the first-term coin shows Mrs. Cleveland greeting working women at a White House reception.



The second-term reverse shows her and her husband at the back of a train greeting a crowd.

Frances Cleveland, whose husband Grover served two non-consecutive terms, appears four times – the obverse and reverse of two 2012 coins – giving her more numismatic appearances than any other real woman.

The wives of John Tyler



John Tyler's first wife, Letitia, died in 1842, the second year of his presidency. Letitia's coin shows her bust on the obverse and playing with daughter Mary and son Robert on the reverse.

The Tyler children are two of three presidential children to have appeared on United States coins. The third is John Quincy Adams, the son of John Adams who served as president himself from 1825 to 1829.

John and Julia Tyler – Wife the second



John Tyler turns up dancing with his second wife on the reverse of the Julia Tyler coin. It is the only U.S. coin that shows dancing.

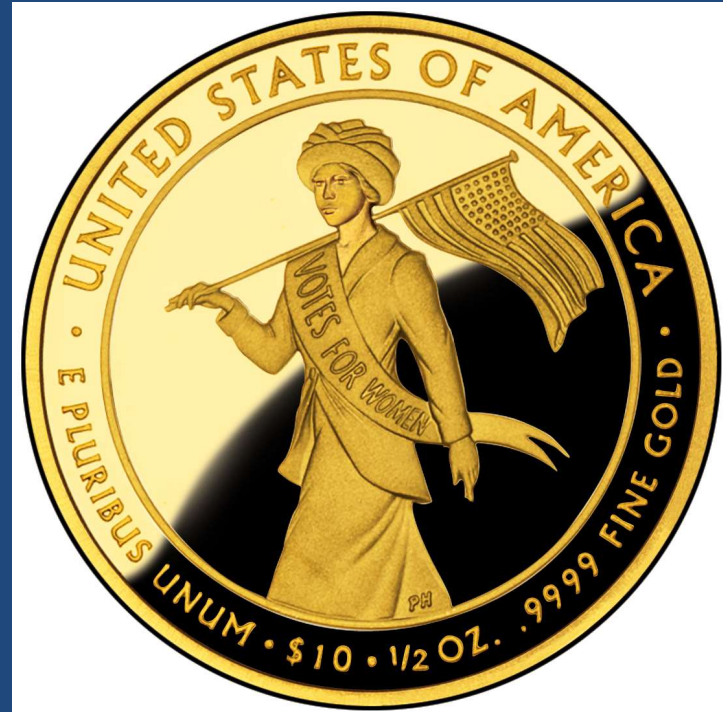
Helpmate



The reverse of the Edith Wilson First Spouse coin touchingly shows her supporting her husband who had suffered a massive stroke while in office. Her hand rests upon his, which holds a cane.

The history of women on U.S. coins follows a trajectory from 18th century personifications of Liberty through women who earned a place on coins because they were helpmates of famous men to women who contributed in their own right significantly to human knowledge and freedom.

Alice Paul



Alice Paul's image on the obverse of the First Spouse gold \$10 coin for Chester Arthur's term was mandated by the Presidential \$1 Coin Act. Liberty appears on the obverse of every other First Spouse coin struck for a president who did not have a spouse while in office.

The only connection between Paul and Arthur is that she was born while he was in office.

Two female scientists honored in 2019



Mary Golda Ross, a member of the Cherokee Nation who worked on the space program, appears on the 2019 Native American \$1 coin.

The coin shows Ross working on equations while an Atlas-Agena rocket blasts off in the background. An equation denoting the energy it takes to leave Earth and reach the orbit of a distant planet, is written in the clouds.



Ross, who died just shy of her 100th birthday in 2008, was one of 40 founding engineers of Lockheed's famed Skunk Works, whose projects included work on the Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter during World War II and the Agena spacecraft for the Gemini and Apollo space programs

Annie Jump Cannon



Annie Jump Cannon, an astronomer who devised the system for classifying stars that is still used, is represented in profile against the night sky on the reverse of the 2019 Delaware American Innovation \$1 coin.



*Annie Jump Cannon
was featured in a
Google doodle on
Dec. 11, 2014*

Cannon, who died in 1941 at age 77, created the Harvard Classification Scheme in which stars are organized and classified based on their temperatures and spectral types.

The American Astronomical Society continues to honor her legacy with the Annie Jump Cannon Award, which is presented annually to a postdoctoral woman researcher for outstanding research and promise for future research.

Three coins celebrate women in 2020



The South Carolina American Innovation dollar will show Septima Clark, the first real African American woman to appear on a United States coin. There are two proposed designs.

Septima Clark



Septima Clark , who died in 1987 at the age of 89, was a leader in the Civil Rights movement, founding Citizen Schools, which taught reading and civics to an estimated 28,000 blacks at improvised schools throughout the South so they could, among other things, pass tests some states required people to take before they could register to vote.

Clark started the schools in South Carolina and Tennessee in the 1950s and expanded throughout the South in the early 1960s as education director for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

“Literacy means liberation,” was her motto.

Elizabeth Jean Peratrovich



Elizabeth Jean Peratrovich, a member of the Tlingit Nation, is depicted on the reverse of the 2020 Native American \$1 coin.

She is credited with helping secure passage of the Territory of Alaska's Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945, the first anti-discrimination law in the United States.



Alaska State Library - Historical Collections

Outraged by a “No Natives Allowed” sign outside the Douglas Inn in Douglas, Alaska, in late 1941, she complained in a letter to the territory’s governor, “The proprietor of Douglas Inn does not seem to realize that our Native boys are just as willing as the white boys to lay down their lives to protect the freedom that he enjoys.”

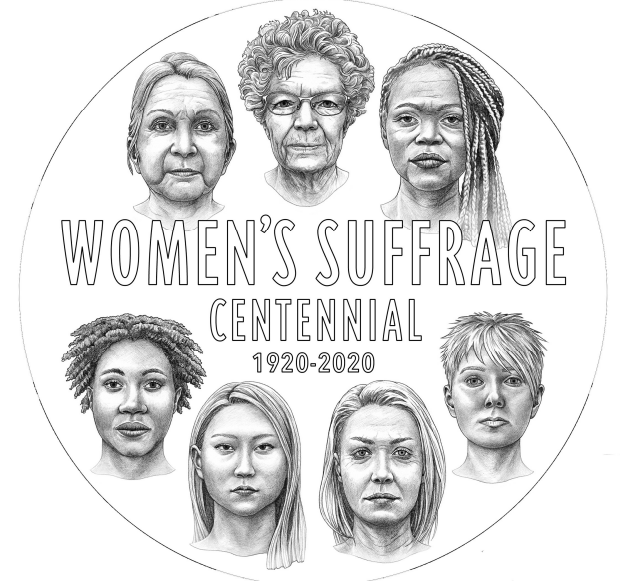
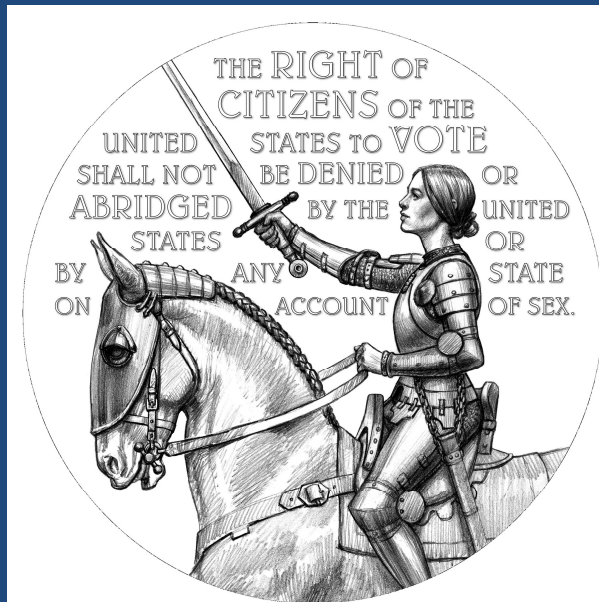
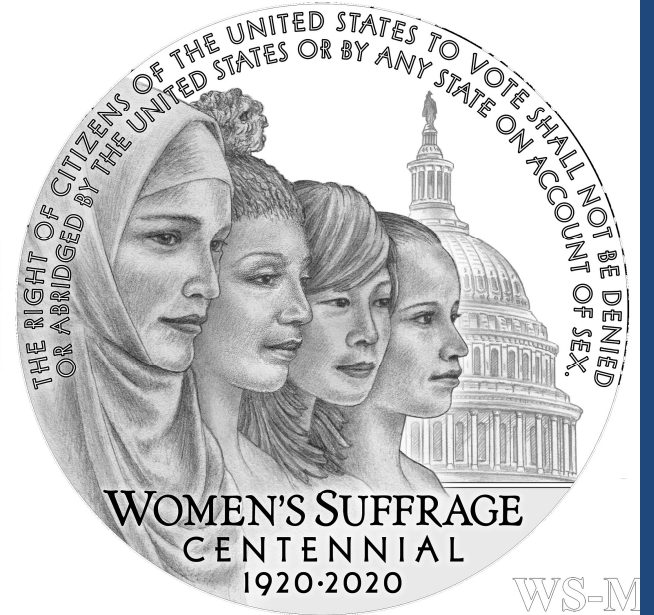
That set in motion a 4-year battle to secure civil rights for Alaskan Native Americans. The state law passed 20 years before the federal Civil Rights Act was enacted.

19th Amendment Centennial

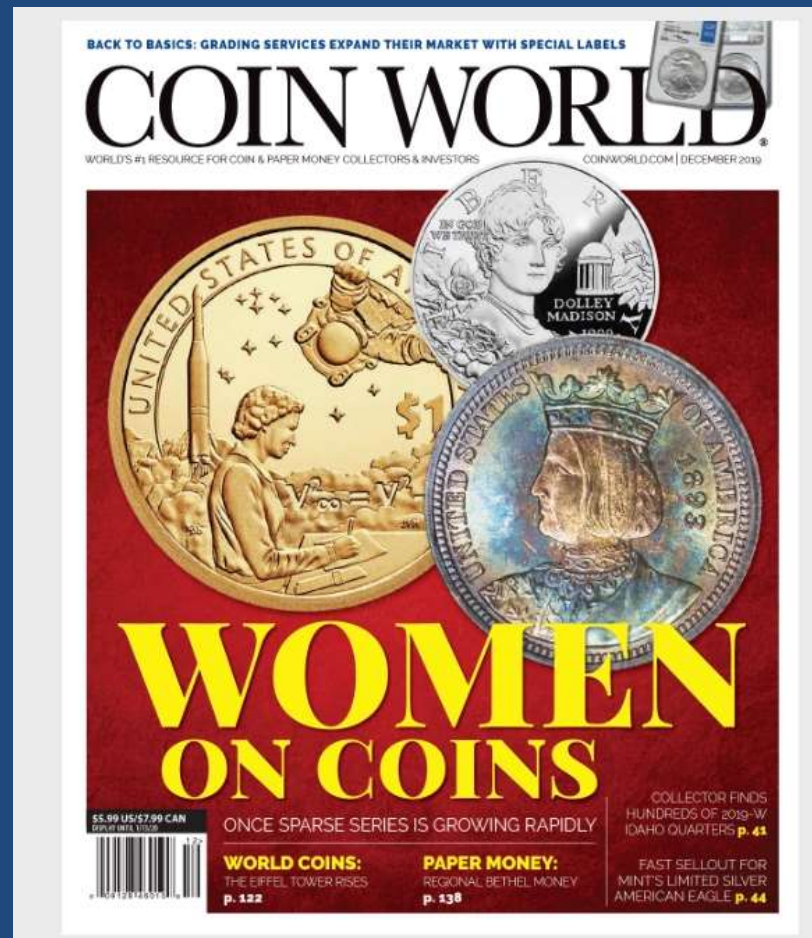


This year, the U.S. Mint will also strike 400,000 commemorative silver dollars celebrating the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution giving women the right to vote.

Designs for the Women's Suffrage Commemorative Coin have not been set, through the Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee considered several designs for the coin and a Mint medal last fall.



These are some of the proposed designs.



This presentation was adapted from the December 2019 Coin World cover story, *Women on Coins* by Gerald Tebben

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